

CWD Update 91

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State and Provincial Updates

Michigan:

The following press release was issued today by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources:

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Agency: Natural Resources

Michigan's First Case of Chronic Wasting Disease Detected at Kent County Deer Breeding Facility

August 25, 2008

LANSING - The Michigan departments of Agriculture (MDA) and Natural Resources (DNR) today confirmed the state's first case of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in a three-year old white-tailed deer from a privately owned cervid (POC) facility in Kent County.

The state has quarantined all POC facilities, prohibiting the movement of all - dead or alive - privately-owned deer, elk or moose. Officials do not yet know how the deer may have contracted the disease. To date, there is no evidence that CWD presents a risk to humans.

DNR and MDA staff are currently reviewing records from the Kent County facility and five others to trace deer that have been purchased, sold or moved by the owners in the last five years for deer and the last seven years for elk. Any deer that may have come in contact with the CWD-positive herd have been traced to their current location and those facilities have been quarantined.

"Michigan's veterinarians and wildlife experts have been working throughout the weekend to complete their investigation," said Don Koivisto, MDA director. "We take this disease very seriously, and are using every resource available to us to implement response measures and stop the spread of this disease."

CWD is a fatal neurological disease that affects deer, elk and moose. Most cases of the disease have been in western states, but in the past several years, it has spread to some midwestern and eastern states. Infected animals display abnormal behaviors, progressive weight loss and physical debilitation.

Current evidence suggests that the disease is transmitted through infectious, self-multiplying proteins (prions) contained in saliva and other fluids of infected animals. Susceptible animals can acquire CWD by direct exposure to these fluids or also from contaminated environments. Once contaminated, research suggests that soil can remain a source of infection for long periods of time, making CWD a particularly difficult disease to eradicate.

Michigan's First Case of Chronic Wasting Disease Detected at Kent County Deer Breeding Facility: "Currently, one of our top concerns is to confirm that the disease is not in free-ranging

deer," said DNR Director Rebecca Humphries. "We are asking hunters this fall to assist us by visiting check stations to allow us to take biological samples from the deer they harvest, so we can perform adequate surveillance of the free-ranging white-tailed deer herd in the area."

Deer hunters this fall who take deer from Tyrone, Soldon, Nelson, Sparta, Algoma, Courtland, Alpine, Plainfield, and Cannon townships will be required to bring their deer to a DNR check station. Deer taken in these townships are subject to mandatory deer check.

The DNR is also asking hunters who are participating in the private land five-day antlerless hunt in September in other parts of Kent County to visit DNR check stations in Kent County so further biological samples can be taken from free-ranging deer for testing. The DNR is in the process of finding additional locations for check stations in Kent County to make it more convenient for hunters.

The deer that tested positive at the Kent County facility was a doe that had been recently culled by the owner of the facility. Michigan law requires sick deer or culled deer on a POC facility be tested for disease. The samples from the Kent County deer tested "suspect positive" last week at Michigan State University Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health, and were sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa last Thursday for confirmatory testing. The positive results of those tests were communicated to the state of Michigan today.

Audits of the facility by the DNR in 2004 and 2007 showed no escapes of animals from the Kent County facility were reported by the owner. Also, there were no violations of regulations recorded during the audits.

Since 2002, the DNR has tested 248 wild deer in Kent County for CWD. In summer 2005, a number of those deer had displayed neurological symptoms similar to CWD; however, after testing it was determined the deer had contracted Eastern Equine Encephalitis.

More information on CWD is available on Michigan's Emerging Diseases Web site at www.michigan.gov/chronicwastingdisease.